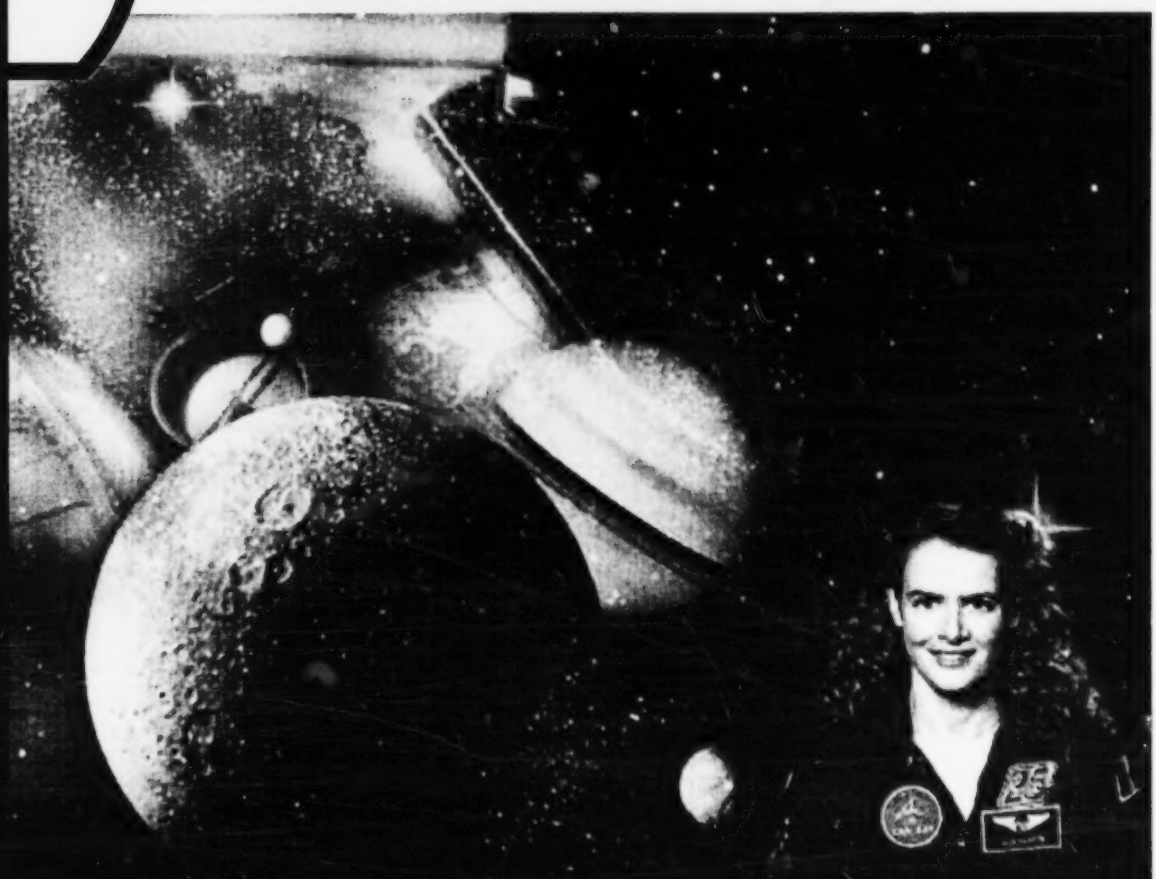
VOL. 4, NO. 2—DECEMBER 2003

SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS



JULIE'S CHALLENGE

In June 2003, some 100 000 students at the end of Elementary Cycle Three met the challenge launched by astronaut Julie Payette

Reach for your **Dreams**

Québec

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Summary

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We wish you a happy 2004!

COVER PAGE
Julie Payette
Astronaut

Exchanging the Legacy of Culture

By Francine Payette
(Translation)

When students first come to school they already have their own world-views, which reflect their cultural backgrounds. Schools have a duty to help young people become more aware of this background and to be receptive to the cultural legacy left to us by all those who came before us and who tried to answer the great questions of existence. Culture is a living thing that evolves in its relationships with people. And it is these relationships that change students, that help them to develop their world-view and to situate themselves in relation to this world. Culture is a construction of identity and, as such, is at the very heart of learning.

It is primarily at school that students have the opportunity to go beyond their immediate environment and accede to this heritage, points of reference for which are found in the different subjects. Students, who must gradually make a place for themselves in society, need an essential communication tool, namely, language. That is why this issue of *Schoolscapes* looks at the compulsory provincewide French test for Grade 6 students in French-language schools: it offers a good example of tasks that encourage students to broaden their range of knowledge and use language effectively.

Schoolscapes also reports on other initiatives under way in schools. We invite you to meet educators at École secondaire Neufchâtel, École Aux-Quatre-Vents de Ste-Julie, École du Bac, École secondaire Beaulieu, École Jean-Jacques-Rousseau, École St-Gabriel and École Migwan. What all these teachers have in common is their desire to give students a solid basic education which entails not only the mastery of intellectual tools, but also curiosity and a concern for rigour and hard work—both for learning and for transferring their intellectual, personal and interpersonal discoveries to their own lives.

Enjoy your reading!

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A meeting of the minds

By Eve Krakow

I am particularly proud of the work accomplished in developing this policy, and I thank all stakeholders who participated," Reid told an audience of about 650 school and school board administrators, educators, consultants and journalists. He stated that, built on the foundations of the education reform, the policy is an extension of the work already under way in the education community for the past few years.

The *Policy on the Evaluation of Learning* is inspired by recent developments in the education sector and in research on the evaluation of learning. It is also consistent with the approach adopted in the 1981 policy. "Teachers have already been working hard to improve their evaluation practices. The policy provides an additional impetus and framework to support this process," said Reid.

Photo: Emmanuel Bégin

The policy presents a unified approach for evaluating learning in general education in the youth and adult sectors as well as in vocational education. "Thus, all education stakeholders will share a common understanding of the broad orientations guiding evaluation," said the minister.

"We are well aware of the challenges inherent in applying some of these orientations in schools," he noted. "For this reason, the MEQ proposes a number of implementation strategies, outlined in the *Implementation Plan for the Policy on the Evaluation of Learning*." In the elementary sector, teachers have received a framework for the evaluation of learning and competency level scales. Professional development sessions have also been provided.

At the secondary level, because mandatory application is slated for September 2005, teachers will have two years to become familiar with the Québec Education Program and the policy. As it has done for the elementary sector, the MEQ will provide secondary teachers with reference documents and appropriate instruments for applying the policy—in particular, a framework and competency level scales—as well as professional development sessions. Research and innovation activities will also be conducted in partnership with schools, school boards and universities.

Reid closed with a few personal observations. "I continually insist on the need for students to reach for their dreams. These dreams must come to life in school as well, in student-teacher relations. In visiting schools, I have observed that when this complicity between the student and the teacher truly exists, when both share their aspirations with each other, then it is possible to realize these dreams." ■

The Policy on the Evaluation of Learning is guided by several broad orientations

- Evaluation as an integral component of all aspects of the learning process
- The importance of the teacher's professional judgment
- Respecting differences
- Conformity with the education program and programs of study
- Active role of the student
- Collaboration of all stakeholders
- Evaluation of learning based on ethical standards
- Improving the quality of the students' spoken and written language
- Certification of studies: upholding the value that society accords to official certification documents
- Recognition of prior learning

By Pascale Sauvé
(Translation)

Concerning Space

Every year, the compulsory French, Language of Instruction examination at the end of Elementary Cycle Three evolves. A simple written examination in the beginning has become a complex, yet stimulating and inspiring assignment that takes place over two weeks.

Last May, students finishing Elementary Cycle Three were invited by none other than Canadian astronaut Julie Payette to take a fabulous trip to the solar system through the magic of writing. One Monday morning, Julie showed up on the computer monitors of the province's elementary schools to invite the students to blast off into space for a few days to discover the planets. This launched the compulsory French, Language of Instruction examination for students at the end of Elementary Cycle Three.

"It was a great way to kick off the activity," said Janick Deschene, who teaches Elementary Cycle Three students at École Aux-Quatre-Vents in Sainte-Julie. "It was very effective." After such an introduction, it's no wonder that her students, along with thousands of others throughout the province, feverishly got to work. The countdown was under way.

A stimulating challenge

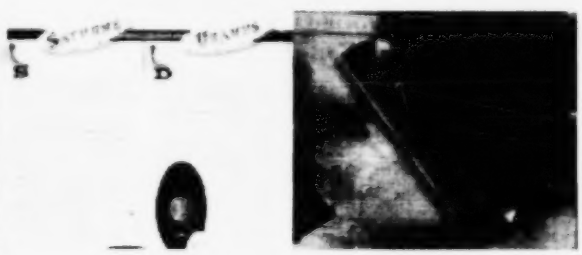
The students had one week to prepare for the trip. "For the challenge, the students had to choose a planet for a visit or a vacation," explained Louis Émond, project coordinator at the MEQ and a member of the examination development team that Diane Talbot has coordinated for several years.

Before choosing a destination, it was important for students to get information on the planets, and that's exactly what they did. They consulted documents made available to them that provided information on the solar system, the planets, life in space, great moments in the history of space exploration, famous Canadian astronauts, etc. "Once they had read about the planets, they were given an assignment to improve their comprehension," said Émond. Students created a comparative table of the characteristics of the solar system's nine planets. This helped them become more familiar with the planets so they could choose the one that would be the most interesting to visit.

The second day, the students explored literature with an adventure story, *Le Berger de comètes*, by Jean-Louis Trudel. This foray into the world of science fiction offered a means of introducing students to the joy of travel through books. Through various activities, they were also encouraged to distinguish between the different elements that characterize a science fiction work.

The third day, the students delved into newspaper clippings on adventure travel: a race in the Sahara desert, going around the world in a balloon, a sailboat excursion and crossing the polar circle. They then explored the different characteristics of the travel diary and identified the elements that made it interesting.

The following two days were reserved for the final preparations. A variety of activities were presented, including reading, poetry, comic strip drawing, games, building of models and other projects. "The three reading assignments were compulsory, but optional activities, some dealing with oral communication and the appreciation of literary works, were offered to teachers," said Émond.



During the week, the students were encouraged to continue their research on the solar system in order to gather more information. They were incited to consult their family and peers, as well as books and Websites on the subject. They had to draw up a list of words they could use for their writing assignment. Throughout their preparations, the students noted their discoveries in the *Dossier de lancement* (launch file) given to them on the first day as well as the information they considered relevant to their mission.

The following Monday was the big day for blasting off! With their launch file in hand—the only document allowed on the journey—the students had to meet *Julie's Challenge* and write a flight diary or a space adventure. They had three days to prepare (choose a destination and take notes on the characteristics of their planet), write a draft, revise it, finalize their text and proofread it.

A model of inspiration

"This examination is like a gift," said Janick Deschene. "It's a complex, well-constructed and interesting assignment for the students." And his students were enthusiastic about meeting the challenge. "We had already chosen space as a theme in June," he added. "When I saw the examination, I was happy because the assignments had the same theme. The students were even more stimulated: they went to the Cosmodôme, carried out a project on space and completed a complex assignment on it." It was quite a coincidence!

"For me, the examination is an evaluation tool," said Deschene. "Throughout the year, we observe and gather information, and this examination confirms our judgment. Naturally, my judgment of the year is not based solely on this examination." Developed by a team from the MEQ, this examination is an interesting example for teachers of a complex assignment. "Since we try to stay as close as possible to the Québec Education Program, the examinations are good models," said Émond. The previous years' examinations, now out in the open, can be reused in class.

Next year

The team is already working on the 2004 examination. Will there be anything new? Sorry, the secret won't be out until June, so you'll have to be patient! "This year, the examination will be done in the same spirit and spread out over two weeks," explained Émond. "The theme was carefully chosen to interest the students and to motivate them to go further and learn more so that they would be excited about writing their text. That's always our goal!" So stay tuned to find out what happens in June… ◀

[illegible] technology

Nothing stands in the way of the development team's efforts to make the examination more and more stimulating and its aspects increasingly integrated. For example, *Julie's Challenge* gave rise to a different challenge. Asking Julie Payette to present the examination to students by video on the Internet was a stroke of genius. Accomplishing it was another matter!

The Ministère de l'Éducation therefore called upon the know-how of RÉCIT to put the video on line so that all the teachers could show it to their students on the day of the launch. "The triggering element was the video of Julie," explained Louis Émond. "We had also provided a written version of the presentation. The video was undoubtedly state-of-the-art, but we did have a plan B, just in case. The students could access it at all times."

Moreover, thanks to their participation in the project, André Roux and Marie-France Laberge, who are in charge of *RÉCIT — Domaine des langues*, came up with a new idea. "We suggested that the students do a digital presentation of their text that we could subsequently put on line," they said. The invitation was therefore launched. "Since it was the end of the year and the students had to retranscribe their text, illustrate it and do the layout, we expected no more than a dozen texts," said Roux, "but we received close to 70." It was a nice surprise that suggests the examination successfully captured the students' interest, not to mention all the e-mail messages they sent to Julie Payette! The texts will be accessible on line on the *RÉCIT—Domaine des langues* Website in February 2004.

This experience will certainly be renewed next year. "The first year, we couldn't have major demands for the students' digital productions because we didn't exactly know how the project would unfold," said Laberge. "We'll see whether we can go further next year."

To access *Julie's Challenge*, the video and the students' productions (in February), consult the Website of the *Service national — Domaine des langues* at the following address: <www.recitlangues.org>

Developed by a team from the MEQ, this examination is an interesting example for teachers of a complex assignment.

Photo: José Rochette

How can you experience the joy of travelling through the solar system without boarding a space shuttle?

Julie's invitation

"Hi! I'm Julie Payette and I'm a Canadian astronaut. In 1999, I travelled and worked on board the space shuttle of Scott Lee and I even made it to the International Space Station. Travelling in space is an extraordinary experience. Not only do you experience weightlessness as you float around the cabin, but while in orbit, you see just how amazing our planet really is. I hope that one day, you will get the opportunity to go into space, but until then, I'd like to issue you a challenge: travelling the solar system through the magic of writing.

To do this, you must write a space adventure or a flight diary. Your teacher will explain in more detail about how to meet this challenge. As with any trip, it is important to be well-prepared before leaving. You'll have to begin by reading about the planets, the solar system, comets, satellites and special travelling conditions in space. To help you do this, we will give you documentation and a magazine called *Scientificité*. Once all your preparations are complete, you and all the Elementary 6 students in Québec will blast off on June 3 and write a text about a trip into space. I'm really looking forward to reading your adventures. Good luck and have a great trip!"

TO READ A VARIETY OF TEXTS

- Pertinent reactions to literary and popular texts.
- Expression of one's own interpretation of a text.
- Extraction of pertinent, implicit and explicit information elements.

First week

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
***Scientificité* magazine**	***Le Berger de comètes***	***Travel Journal***
Reading purpose	***Reading purposes***	***Reading purposes***
Find out about the planets of the solar system in order to choose a destination for an imaginary voyage.	Discover the joy of an adventure in the solar system by reading a science fiction text. Observe certain elements of the text in order to prepare for *Julie's Challenge*.	Discover the joy of travel by reading excerpts from a travel journal. Observe certain elements of the text in order to prepare for *Julie's Challenge*.
Task 1	**Task 2**	**Task 3**

TO WRITE A VARIETY OF TEXTS

- Pertinence and sufficiency of ideas related to the topic.
- Appropriate organization of the text.
- Adequate formulation of ideas.
- Observance of the rules of language.

Second week

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3
Preparatory activities	**Writing of a first draft**	**Revision, writing the final copy, proofreading and word count.**
Where will we go? *A crew in distress.* *Alert on Pluto!*	***Writing purpose***	**Review of *Julie's Challenge***
	Discover the joy of travelling in the solar system through one's imagination: by telling the story of an adventure that happened on the way to, on or around a planet or by telling the story of a journey to, on or around a planet	

An interdisciplinary project in Secondary I

Global Warming

By Francine Payette, based on a paper by Jean Papillon
(Translation)

The interest that some young people have in school is linked to the meaning they give to their activities. Some students memorize formulas and definitions in order to get good marks, without realizing that their knowledge can help them understand the world they are living in. This means that at the end of their school year, they will have a great deal of knowledge that they will probably forget rather quickly because it is meaningless to them.

It was this observation that incited a team of eleven Secondary I teachers from École secondaire Neufchâtel to take action. Together, they proposed an interdisciplinary project to students that would allow them to study an issue in their everyday lives and construct their explanations and responses using geography, mathematics, ecology, information technology and French resources. The project, spread over four months, involved more than 280 students. The team of teachers therefore embarked on a community learning process: not only were students to learn, but the adults would have to come up with new methods and models of organizing work, time and space.

Choosing an issue

Choosing the issue was certainly a very important part of the project, said Jean Papillon, a French teacher. The teachers took into account the areas of interest of the majority of students, access to information available on the topic, the contribution of each subject to the project and the various ways of exploring the issue. In the end, they chose global warming. Because the summer of 2002 had been particularly hot and dry, students were very aware of this problem, its causes and effects. They were directly affected by this problem, and they would be able to find lots of information on it, said Papillon. Keeping certain requirements in mind, the students were free to choose how to make their presentation. So with much enthusiasm, the students and the teachers began researching global warming!

The task at hand

The project consisted of several phases, each one in a different subject. One phase took place in ecology and geography at the same time. Ecology teacher Ginette Gagné presented the project to the students. She asked each one to assess their knowledge and beliefs on the subject and prepare questions for the climatologist they would be meeting. The climatologist not only talked about the career of meteorologist, but he answered students' questions and explained certain weather phenomena that have resulted from climate change.

In the French class, students were put into teams of four; and together, they had to come up with a work plan and choose the type of presentation they wanted to do. To help guide them, the students were

Photo: Francine Payette

asked to complete a questionnaire on their areas of interest and skills. The results helped the students better define their role in the team and choose the presentation format that best suited their interests and skills. Each team then decided on its presentation format, choosing from a variety of formats such as newspaper article, comic strip, poster, brochure, Web page, PowerPoint presentation, play or interview.

Since the students needed to gather information, it was an excellent opportunity for the French teacher to introduce the module on descriptive text. The students began by reading a text that described the phenomenon of global warming. They were then asked to organize the information in a descriptive diagram in which they identified each aspect discussed: the greenhouse effect, climate imbalance, the causes and effects of global warming and what can be done to reduce pollutant emissions. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) were also used to do research on the Internet, which helped the students find additional documents.

Once the students had collected this information, they were ready to learn about the effects of global warming on their immediate environment. They needed a work tool, which they found in their mathematics class. Under the supervision of Thérèse Nadeau and Daniel Boudreault, the students made climatic diagrams of the temperature and precipitation averages in Québec in 2002.

Using their descriptive diagram from French class and the climatic diagram from mathematics, the students now began the analysis phase in their geography class. They identified the characteristics of the 2002 climatic diagrams by comparing them to theoretical models. They realized that the gap between the two averages was growing.

The students were able to use this analysis in their ecology class to learn about the effects of global warming on our ecosystems, and more particularly on flora, fauna and water. A conclusion was becoming increasingly clear: there were unquestionable signs of a change in the climate that posed dangers to its future. The students were then asked to come up with means of action that could be taken by secondary students to help mitigate this phenomenon.

The challenge faced by teachers

"How will we manage the different presentations chosen by the students?" the teachers wondered. The solution to this logistical problem was common planning. The teachers agreed to group the teams by type of project and assign a teacher whom the students could count on to supervise each group. Teachers volunteered to supervise the group whose project was most compatible with their interests.

How would they bring all the students from the different groups together at the same time? With the collaboration of the school administration, the teachers decided to set aside half a day so that each team could meet with its supervising teacher.

Meanwhile, the students did their own planning because they had to complete the entire project during this half-day. After determining the materials they needed and sending their request to the person concerned, they had to have the fruits of their research in hand. Unfinished projects had to be completed at school or at home based on the established schedule.

Presenting the research results

The presentations took place over three consecutive lunch periods in an exhibit that was open to everyone. Each team of students had a stand where they presented the results of their research.

Different evaluation methods

The teachers who came to see the exhibit were asked to complete an evaluation form for each team, based on originality, the quality of spoken French, the quality of the information, and the relevance of the items presented. Students got to vote for their favourite stand.

The teams were to give a second presentation in the French class, under the supervision of Rachel Lefebvre and Jean Papillon. In addition to explaining the phenomenon of global warming, its causes and the effects on our environment, the students had to explain their work process and the motivation behind their final production. Their conclusion was based on what they had learned and how they perceived the situation following their research. Although the presentation was done by the team, each student was evaluated individually. A standard evaluation table for oral

Papillon and his colleagues saw that the choice of an integrating project required that students draw on all competencies to construct their responses.

presentations, with ten items worth five points each, was given to several teachers who, in addition to the French teacher, also attended the presentations and evaluated the students.

The third evaluation was a combined self-evaluation and peer evaluation. Each student had to evaluate their peers' participation in the cooperative work.

To conclude the project, some speakers were invited to present different solutions to the students, who were now very aware of the challenges linked to global warming.

Interdisciplinarity and development of competencies

Papillon and his colleagues were able to see that the choice of an integrating project helped give meaning to each school subject involved and allowed the students to use each subject to construct their responses. The students themselves noticed the links between the subjects since they had to use the knowledge they acquired in each one to move closer to resolving the problem in question.

For students, this type of interdisciplinary project is a truly complex task that not only requires intellectual competencies, but also personal and relational competencies. In fact, this type of project is ideal to develop all the cross-curricular competencies in the Québec Education Program. The students had to use information, solve problems, show creativity, critical judgment and proficiency in technologies, and choose relevant and effective methods of work, cooperation and communication.

Vision for the future

Papillon believes that other subjects could benefit from being part of this type of integrating project. For example, it was noted that many of the documents available on the Internet were in English, which could motivate students to learn this second language. Also, the pride felt in learning and presenting the fruits of one's work seems to be a key element throughout the process.

In this era of the reform of our pedagogical practices, a multidisciplinary integrating project is a very stimulating tool for both teachers and students. Even though it requires thorough team planning, it is very stimulating for students and encourages them to get actively involved in their learning. It will be much easier to implement this project in the future, said Papillon.

Stages of the interdisciplinary project on global warming

Ecology

Phase 1: Introduction of the project *(2 periods)*
- Demystification
- True or false questions
- Preparation of questions for guest speaker

Phase 9: Effects of global warming *(1 period)*
- On fauna
- On flora
- On water

Phase 10: Finding actions that students can take *(1 period)*

French

Phase 2: Creation of teams and development of a work plan (teams of 4)
- Choice of clientele
- Type of product to be produced (newspaper, poster, etc.)
- Project description *(1 period)*

Phase 4: Reading of a descriptive text on the following aspects:
- Greenhouse effect
- Global warming
- Causes and effects of warming
- Actions that can be taken to reduce pollution *(1 period)*

Phase 11: Production *(2 periods)*

Phase 13: Oral presentation *(1 or 2 periods)*

Mathematics

Phase 6: Data collection and production of tables illustrating temperature and precipitation averages in Quebec in 2002 *(1 period)*

Phase 7: Construction of a climatic diagram representing the climatic data for 2002 *(1 period)*

Geography

Phase 8: Identification of the characteristics of the 2002 climatic diagram and comparison with theoretical models on our climate *(1 period)*

Phase 9: Effects of global warming on climate *(1 period)*

ICTs (information and communication technologies)

Phase 5: Research on the Internet to find additional information on the phenomenon

Conferences and presentations

Phase 3: Meeting with a climatologist (2 groups at a time) *(1 period)*

Phase 12: Presentation in the form of an exhibit *(3 days, during lunch period)*

Phase 14: Meeting with Friends of the Earth to learn about composting *(1 period)*

By Evie Krakow

Choosing A Pet

Most kids long to have a pet. What better way, then, to get them motivated and engaged in reading, writing and math than by designing activities around owning a pet?

Last spring, 52 Elementary Cycle One teachers in English-language schools across Québec delivered a new unit to their students, called "Choosing A Pet." Designed to evaluate students' competency development in English and Mathematics, the project will serve to provide the Ministère de l'Éducation with feedback on how students are doing under the new curriculum. The unit also offers a model for the evaluation of competencies.

"Every so often, the Ministry requests an examination of the curriculum to get some statistical data and to determine if adjustments are required," explained Anne Doucet, Coordinator for Evaluation for English Language Arts at the MEQ, and the project's coordinator. A dozen teachers and consultants from various boards worked under the leadership of Doucet and Beverly Steele (former Coordinator for Evaluation) to develop the materials.

A total of 52 classes from public and private schools across Québec were chosen at random to participate in the study. Teachers received two days of in-service training, as well as a teacher's guide and all the materials required to deliver the unit—from posters, books and videos to glue sticks and envelopes.

The Tasks

"Students were asked to consider issues of pet ownership," said Doucet. They were asked: What animal would make a good pet? Why do people have pets? What about unusual pets? Four animals shared the spotlight: a ferret, a boa constrictor, a parrot and a green tree frog.

A variety of sources and text types were used: information texts, stories, letters and journals. Students watched a video in which a child goes to the pet store with a parent and asks questions about one of the animals and how to take care or it. Four such videos were produced specifically for the project. Materials also included children's books, posters, pamphlets and magazines. "We developed a series of four magazines for each animal, modelled on the specialty magazines you see on the market, but rewritten in an inviting way for young children, using lots of images," explained Doucet.

Children worked in groups formed around the animal they chose. At the end, each group presented its findings to the rest of the class. "In this way, the children learned about the other three animals from their peers. This also built in motivation to listen."

The project modelled a pedagogy "that reflects the expectations of the reform," said Doucet. One aspect was showing children how to do research. They were taught the "note box" technique, in which a sheet of paper with boxes on it is used to keep track of information. The children had to use five words or less in each box. They later shared note boxes and organized this information to create their final presentation.

There was also a strong math component to the project. Students voted for the animal most likely to make the best pet and manipulated this data on histograms, graphs and charts. They also calculated the cost of keeping an animal. Using play money and a simulated pet-store flyer, they could purchase three items for their pet. If they didn't have enough money, they calculated how much they were missing and identified ways to lower their costs. "There were some funny responses that reflected kids' understanding of the world and economics," said Doucet. "Some said, 'I'd hold a garage sale.' Others said, 'I'd put it on my credit card.'"

Sylvia Hancheruk taught the unit to her students at Harold Sheppard School in Sorel-Tracy. "There was a lot of enthusiasm from the students, and a lot of personal input," she said. "They could all relate

Photos: Lisa Ramsay

to the topic." She found that the unit was not that different from what she usually teaches. "Having it all written down, with referencing to the reform, just validated what I'd been doing for a long time."

Evaluation

Evaluation focused on competencies in English Language Arts and Mathematics, as well as the cross-curricular competency *to use information*. "We structured the tasks to allow for a revealing of the knowledge acquired," said Doucet.

This step took place at MEQ offices over two weeks in August. Each portfolio was coded, with any reference to the school or child removed. About 25 teachers participated: some had been part of the production committee that produced the unit, others had administered it in the classroom, while others were seeing it for the first time. All received two days of training and preparation.

Marking was done in teams of three, using a system designed by Beverley Steele. "Triad marking is a unique way of doing large-scale marking," said Doucet. Each portfolio is read by three people, who judge the work using rubrics. The final mark is based on majority rule. In cases where all three arrive at different scores, a fourth teacher is called in to analyze the work.

The portfolio included an oral component. Each child had selected a story book and read it to one of their peers, who operated the tape recorder. The child then responded to questions about the story he or she had just read. Evaluators listened to these audio tapes to evaluate the reading competency. "One of the strategies we wanted teachers to consider was how listening to oral reading can inform you as a teacher about what to teach next or how to assist that child in becoming a better reader," explained Doucet.

Teachers participating in the evaluation seemed to enjoy the experience of working in triads. "It was a learning curve for me," said one teacher. "Listening to the audio tapes helped me refine my listening skills. We also had a lot of pedagogical discussions about how to interpret students' work." Another teacher found that working in triads confirmed her own professional judgment. "You find that, except for the odd one, you are thinking along the same lines. And it helps you find specific things that you might not have noticed otherwise."

Results

The data gathered will be analyzed from several points of view. The primary objective of the study is to see if these children, who have been with the reform since preschool, are achieving the outcomes expected at the end of Elementary Cycle One. A report submitted to the Minister of Education will outline recommendations for curriculum adjustments and delivery.

There are also two sub-components to the study. One is the impact of second language in English schools. For although the project was carried out in English, for many children in English schools, this is not their mother tongue. "This is really quite unique to our province, and it has become more and more evident as we've examined the children's work," said Doucet. "Also, as a community, we have elected to have immersion classes, or to devote large blocks of time to studying another language, i.e. French. This also affects our instruction of English, because of the allotment of time."

The second sub-component is a study of oral reading among at-risk children. Teachers were asked to tape-record three children who do not seem to be reaching the expected level of competency. A representational number of these tapes will be analyzed in depth by a team of teachers specialized in early reading intervention.

Professional Development

The unit, evaluation tools and student samples obtained from the study will also be used in professional development workshops with teachers. "The outcomes of the study will be used in workshop situations, both to demonstrate how to evaluate learning at the end of a cycle, and to provide a model of how teachers can get together within the cycle to talk about learning," Doucet explained.

Although the results are still being tabulated, the project is deemed a success. "We see this as a very rich resource," she said. "We're delighted with the engagement that children manifested in their work: there's enthusiasm, strong voice in writing, pleasure and enjoyment in working in groups, and children showing real understanding of world issues."

The French Connection

The "Choosing A Pet" project is the sister project of "À la recherche d'une île merveilleuse," carried out in the French sector. Both sectors received the same mandate. Initially, the two communities worked together. They separated when the time came to develop the units specifically for the two different language of instruction programs. "But we continued to share back and forth as we developed the units. We mutually borrowed and adapted various approaches," said Anne Doucet.

Resources and Opportunities

Arts and culture week in Québec schools 2004: Revelling in the Marvellous and the Fantastic

Arts and Culture Week in Québec Schools will take place for the thirteenth year in a row with the 2004 edition slated for February 8 to 15. This year, the entire educational system is invited to "revel in the marvellous and the fantastic." Pass the word in your school!

Essor award contest 2002-2003: an exceptional year!

Keep an eye out for the Essor award contest gala to be broadcast during the holiday season on Télé-Québec.

Virtual reading circle

The designers of this French-language virtual writing and reading circle wish to foster a love of reading among young people and help them bring to life what they read. Students participating in the circle are invited to read novels while those who are comfortable surfing the Internet get help to find out more about historical eras, clothing, climates, animals, words and locations. Surfers also take advantage of this interactivity to appreciate works of literature along with the students. The tools used to accomplish this are emails, discussion forums and educational chat. Although primarily in French, the recitlangues site also features some English resources designed for ESL students.

For more information, visit www.recitlangues.org and click on the virtual reading and writing circle icon.

Focus on Culture

Support document written to help the governing boards of elementary and secondary schools in Québec introduce a cultural dimension into their school's educational project. This publication was prepared by the Direction de la concertation interministérielle of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications with the collaboration of the Direction de la formation et de la titularisation du personnel scolaire of the Ministère de l'Éducation.

Website: www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/culteduc/artsculture.htm

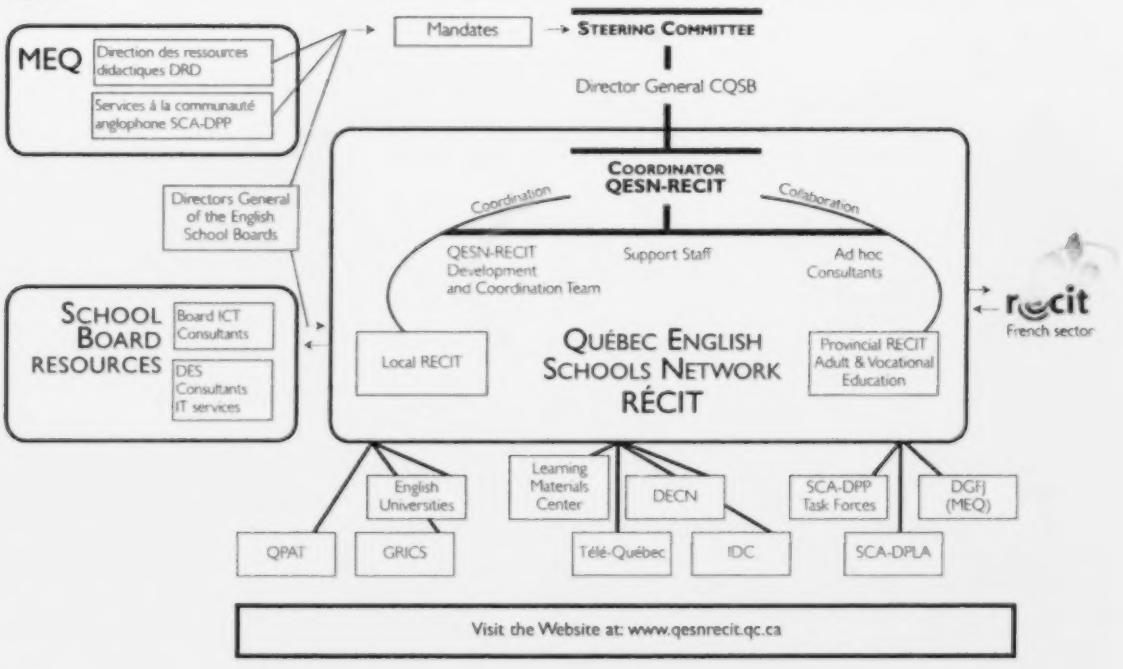
You can also consult the Culture in Education Partnership Website for information on this Ministère de la Culture et des Communications funding program. www.mcc.gouv.qc.ca/programme/partnership.htm

The Observatoire of the Société des musées québécois: an evolving cultural resource

The Observatoire of the Société des musées québécois is an information network on Québec museums and cultural sites. Its Website offers Musées à découvrir, an area with six major topics to explore (the Thematic Routes and Museum Guide are also available in English, under Museums to Discover). The "Réserve virtuelle" offers access to a bank of images and data from Québec's museum collections. Constantly being updated, this collection currently lists over 2,500 images of artwork, objects, artifacts and specimens organized according to type: fine arts, ethnology and history, archaeology, the natural sciences and science and technology. "Zone scolaire" offers teachers of every discipline a variety of cultural resources and online activities to explore with their students. The site's partnership with the field of education helps schools pursue their cultural mission.

Not to be missed: www.musees.quebec.museum

QESN-RÉCIT is a fusion of the local RÉCIT, the provincial RÉCIT for the anglophone community, and the former Québec English Schools Network.



By Claude Vallières
(Translation)

Integrating Culture into the Schools

In Québec, we have long been pondering culture and education. It is therefore not surprising that because of the ongoing fusion of these two fundamental worlds of human development, we are forced to continuously redefine the challenges involved and specify guidelines for intervention.

How can learning be designed to integrate culture? This is the question currently being considered by the committee on the integration of culture into the schools. Some of their thoughts can be found on the following pages.

What exactly does it refer to?

Following the publication of the educational policy statement, which preceded the reform, various keywords and a number of expressions have cropped up in the discourse of those concerned with the qualitative presence of culture in school. So, the question is: what is culture? What is meant by *improvement of cultural content*? What does the integration of culture at school refer to? How are these concepts related?

Improvement of cultural content

The improvement of cultural content in the school curriculum is one of the goals targeted by the 1997 educational policy statement and originated in the report entitled *Reaffirming the Mission of Our Schools*, also published in 1997. It was suggested that a cultural approach to teaching be favoured, with emphasis on the importance of clearly anticipating the integration of culture into the different subjects. The choice of cultural references found in the Québec Education Program is one way of highlighting the signs of culture in each subject.

Improvement of cultural content is therefore an objective to be reached and a goal that must be shared by all stakeholders in education. It can only be reached by integrating culture at school.

Integration of a cultural dimension into schools

While the idea we have of culture and the methods suggested to improve the cultural content in the school curriculum may be clear, they still need to be applied in the classroom in order for students to benefit from it. Three focuses of integration of cultural content at school have been identified. The first focus is learning and teaching in the classroom on a daily basis. Culture can then take shape through the use of meaningful cultural references associated with various components of the Québec Education Program (cross-curricular competencies, broad areas of learning, programs of study). The aims, orientations and components of the QEP are all "gateways" that promote the emphasis of culture. Lastly, the collaboration of the school's cultural partners favours the concerted action of many education and cultural actors.

Culture

Culture, in its broadest sense, is made up of different aspects: anthropology (the study of the cultures of different human societies through their institutions, family structures, beliefs, technologies, traditions), history (knowledge of the past with regard to the life of humanity, a society, a person, or an account of actions or events from a certain period, nation or branch of the human spirit considered worth remembering), art, literature, linguistics, sociology (the study of social facts and phenomena), territory, science, technology, media, etc.

The approach offered in the document suggests that culture is both an object and a relationship. As an object, culture corresponds to a set of things created by humans in response to areas of interest, needs, questions or problems. On the other hand, a close relationship between culture and individuals helps them build a relationship with themselves, with others and with the world.

Measure to fund the introduction of a cultural dimension into schools

Culture at school: An active, dynamic and interactive dimension

The goals of this measure are the following:

- *Encourage a cultural dimension in the classroom and in school life through the collaborative efforts of the cycle team or school team, in conjunction with the QEP.*
- *Foster a sense of innovation and creativity among teachers on the cycle or school team with regard to the community's cultural resources, by closely linking these resources with the learning activities pursued in each of the QEP's subject areas.*
- *Create situations wherein students acquire meaningful, long-lasting experiences in a variety of contexts to enable them to better appreciate cultural life and the world around them.*
- *Support the school's efforts to develop a dialogue with cultural partners, while taking regional diversity into account.*

Translation of an extract from a document aimed at elementary schools entitled "*Mesure de soutien à l'intégration de la dimension culturelle à l'école,*" March 2003.

By Martine Labrie (Translation)

A Steady Stream of High-quality Projects!

This year's projects, both those already completed and those ongoing, are highly creative, stimulating initiatives that bring schools into contact with their communities. Products of a dynamic, evolving milieu, the ideas being submitted use preparatory, production and transfer of learning activities to touch on all subject areas, incorporate the QEP's broad areas of learning and call on a number of cross-curricular competencies.

In this special edition of *Schoolscapes* devoted to culture, we present an inspiring educational initiative carried out at École du Bac in Saint-Lambert de Lauzon during the 2002-2003 school year. The project was supported, in part, by the measure to facilitate the introduction of a cultural dimension into schools.

By Annie Champagne, with Martine Lapoint, Michel Clément and France Grenier (Translation)

École du Bac Students Celebrate Their Roots

The birth of a project

Project leader Ms. Rancourt came up with the idea in the spring of 2002. "We've been organizing culturally oriented projects at our school for several years now," she explained. The school team's interest in such projects is a direct consequence of the Ministère de l'Éducation's new emphasis on integrating cultural elements into the learning activities offered to students. Given the scope of the preparations for the parish's 150th anniversary, the school team wanted to take advantage of the event to offer students learning activities related to their environment. Since the teaching staff wanted to involve the entire community in the school's educational and cultural activities, they worked to link major events in the parish's history with the projects proposed. To this end, volunteer parents and teachers met to plan activities for the summer of 2002. In late June, students were asked to discover everything they could about their ancestors. Once their research was completed, they were given the option of drawing their family tree, creating a photomontage or drawing a picture of one of their ancestors at work. At the beginning of the school year, these projects were exhibited in various locations throughout the school so all students could view them.

At the same time, thanks to the resources available, various activities were selected for the 2002-2003 school year. "The entire community took a hand in seeing that the projects selected were carried to completion," acknowledged Rancourt.

A return to sources

Under the theme *Apprendre, c'est plonger vers la liberté au coeur de nos racines* (Learning means embracing freedom while respecting our roots), the initiative was launched on the first day of school at a celebration featuring traditional music and students and teachers in period dress. The community was also involved, with municipal representatives and costumed characters from the Village des défricheurs in Saint-Prosper de Beauce in attendance. A few weeks later, École du Bac students reciprocated with a visit to the Village des défricheurs. Touring the site and participating in a history

rally called *À la découverte de mes ancêtres* (On the trail of my ancestors), which was built on the research done over the summer, the 485 students were able to make use of the historic knowledge they had gained in the preceding weeks by getting a first-hand look at their ancestors' habits and customs. In addition to being directly related to the "Citizenship and Community Life" broad area of learning, this memorable visit launched a series of other activities such as a library exhibit of traditional objects, a visit from a storyteller, the developing of Websites, the creation of a souvenir book and the production of a large-scale Christmas show featuring music, dancing and folk tales. This show highlighted the parish's seniors, who were asked to recount how they celebrated Christmas in the old days. A papermaking micro-business was even set up within the school, which produced greeting cards. This initiative gave students an opportunity to learn how a business is run and develop their skills at creating artistic productions. The numerous activities of the 2002-2003 school year were then subject to a transfer of learning in the classroom. Learning transfer activities enabled students to reinforce what they had learned and at the same time develop their competencies in the areas of arts education and social sciences.

Another year, another theme

To bridge the gap between last year and 2003-2004, organizers put together a project for the summer of 2003. A small group of students, teachers and parents helped decorate a float for the big parade commemorating the parish's 150th anniversary. This undertaking helped the students understand the degree to which the educational system has evolved over the past 50 years. In addition to presenting historic ideas, the activity enabled students to draw on prior learning. Decorated according to the theme *l'école d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* (Our school: yesterday and today), the float was a reproduction of École du Bac as it looked 50 years ago and as it looks today, replete with computers and the latest technology. The project leader is still surprised by the enthusiasm the float generated: "The entire community was excited!" she exclaims.

The theme *l'école d'hier et d'aujourd'hui* was a very deliberate choice because École du Bac will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2004. The float was just the first in a series of projects planned for 2003-2004. Rancourt already has a number of ideas in mind. "The school has already put up an exhibit of photographs covering the past 150 years and other activities will be organized for the rest of the year." This year's theme, *Bouillon de passions* (A potpourri of passions), preserves the spirit of the 150th anniversary while serving as a transition to the school's 50th anniversary.

A story worth following

The activities organized at École du Bac were a resounding success with students and the community as a whole. "The goal of these projects is first and foremost to motivate the children by offering them interesting cultural activities throughout the school year," concluded Rancourt. And this supplementary motivation also influenced what the students learned. They acquired competencies in the areas of arts education and social sciences, not to mention all the QEP's cross-curricular competencies, particularly "to cooperate with others" and "to use creativity," both of which clearly benefited from the enriched support.

Through its projects, the École du Bac school team promotes culture and the development of the QEP's competencies in its students. ◀

The many activities of the 2002-2003 school year were then subject to a transfer of learning in the classroom to enable students to reinforce what they had learned.

Photo: Yann Bertrand

By Caroline Raymond
(Translation)

Some Cultural Gymnastics for the Mind!

Culture: a simple or complex matter?

a) an integral part of education, even if its manifestations are difficult to see in the classroom every day

b) complicated to talk about and to come to a consensus!

c) a good thing to look up in the dictionary

d) the desire to always learn more about humanity and its great achievements

e) better defined by historians, artists, writers or scientists

f) a combination of all of the above

g) none of the above. For you, culture is:

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The famous "improvement of cultural content": Myth or reality?

a) a noble vision of the mind, but I do not necessarily understand what form it can take at school

b) an expression taken from the *Educational Policy Statement: Québec Schools on Course* (1997) that has never found a place in your discourse or that of your teaching colleagues

c) a concept that piques your curiosity to the point that you are impatient to find out more about the meaning given to it in the new Québec Education Program

d) an academic term that does not influence your teaching because of a lack of time, among other things

Up for some more questions?

e) an educational aim to be shared that is translated, in particular, by the integration of the cultural dimension into schools

f) a combination of all of the above

g) none of the above. For you, improvement of cultural content is defined as:

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Ready for the final leg?

The cultural dimension in schools: theory or practice?

a) all the events in the school calendar, such as visiting museums, attending dance performances or plays, discovering heritage sites, etc.

b) a laborious task, considering the lack of time needed to properly integrate it in the classroom

c) so important that it's time for the entire school team to be concerned with it in order to give the school's educational project a boost

d) a serious educational responsibility because you do not feel sufficiently equipped to make it tangible in all learning opportunities

e) an important factor in the overall development of young people, but you are always looking for indicators in the Québec Education Program to better understand its application in the classroom

f) all the content or knowledge related to the subjects that must be properly taught to ensure that students integrate it

g) a combination of all of the above

h) none of the above. For you, culture at school is:

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_____
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_____

By Caroline Raymond
(Translation)

Expo 67 as a Meaningful Cultural Reference:

Why and for Who?

But why do I foster such an emotional relationship with this famous world exposition? Is it because some pavilions are still part of Montreal's urban backdrop and their restoration continues to excite my imagination? Is it because my parents and some of my teaching colleagues have told me about their favourite things and the countless hours they spent wandering around the wonderful *Man and His World* exposition that welcomed 50 million visitors? Or, is it because I like dreaming about having lived my 20 years during what I consider a more exhilarating than quiet revolution. In this revolution of morals, points of view and ideas, everything was possible!

Whether or not you find my vision of Expo 67 idealistic, I think it would be interesting to consider together the possibility of using this cultural reference with students. Since Expo 67 has become a pretence for making discoveries, experimenting and learning, then perhaps students also have memories to share of exhibitions they've visited and stories to tell about events they found innovative or amazing.

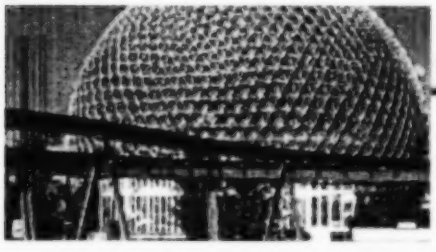
In addition to discussing the reference of Expo 67, this article aims to suggest guidelines to help you evaluate the nature of the cultural references you are considering using in the classroom, their contribution to your students' education and their educational scope.

Before continuing this exercise together, we must define the concept of cultural references. *Cultural references* refer to objects of learning that are culturally meaningful, whose use in the classroom allows students to enrich their relationship with themselves, with others and with the world: events, media products or everyday objects (provided that they make it possible to examine meaningful social phenomena or trends), traditional cultural objects, territorial references, artistic productions, scientific discoveries, ways of thinking, values and practices that influence behaviours, personalities, etc.

If we acknowledge that a cultural reference is first and foremost a dynamic object of learning, we are right in asking ourselves whether it comes from *immediate culture*, that is, the students' familiar world that includes both their media and family culture, or from *general culture*, which refers to the cultural heritage from here and elsewhere and to the current cultural manifestations in the world, rather than to an encyclopedia culture that is memorized.

What type of culture does Expo 67 belong to?

- ❍ Immediate culture
- ❍ General culture



Because Expo 67 is a universal event that brought together 62 countries, and part of our cultural heritage, I tend to think that it stems from general culture, all the more so for students born more than 20 years after its inauguration.

If we go by the principle that cultural references influence several areas of human activity, we are right in asking ourselves whether they are representative of a period, a course of thought or the values of society, whether they are answers to problems that exist in different areas of activity, or whether they comprehend the power of imagination and the creativity of humans.

What does this cultural reference represent for you?

❍ A period
❍ A course of thought
❍ The values of society
❍ An answer to problems
❍ Other

I believe that this event attests to the great achievements in more than one area of human activity. This was an encounter of science, art, architecture and the morals of a period, seen with the eyes of 62 nations.

If we believe that the use of cultural references in the classroom must foster the development of attitudes in students that allow them to play an active role both as learners and as citizens, we are right in wondering about the type of contribution these references make to students' overall education. This question can be examined from three angles: openness to their immediate environment, openness to the realities outside their immediate environment or their personal enrichment.

Which angle would you have favoured with your students?

❍ Openness to their environment
❍ Openness to external realities
❍ Personal enrichment

How can the use of Expo 67 contribute to students' overall education?

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Expo 67 is a reference that, I believe, allows students to open up to the realities outside their immediate environment. This event opens up students' minds to elements that they would not necessarily have access to in their immediate environment. Using this reference also contributes to developing their curiosity about the culture of certain countries represented during the event. Lastly, it helps establish links between the present and the past so that students get a better understanding of today's reality.

Finally, if the educational scope of cultural references resides in teachers' intention to foster the development of subject-specific competencies and the realization of cross-curricular learnings in students, we are right in wondering whether cultural references present genuine opportunities for use in a learning situation or a project and how they relate to the Québec Education Program.

Using this cultural reference, what kind of situations could you develop?

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_____

The use of this reference affords the opportunity to highlight several competencies from the social sciences, language, arts and science and technology programs. Exploring Expo 67 in the classroom with students could lead to a project whose main theme would be innovation in Québec in the 1960s compared to innovation in the 2000s. Secondary students would be asked to transform the most unique areas in the school in order to exhibit their artistic productions, texts or objects made in the classroom with new information and communication technologies.

Your perceptions may differ from mine, but that's fine, because integrating culture at school can also mean drawing attention to one's own cultural resources by accepting that one does not know everything and by embarking on a journey of research and questioning.

Given that Expo 67 is a meaningful cultural reference for teachers, how can we convey this perception to students? This question is an important one when we aim to highlight a cultural reference in the classroom. It is therefore important to show interest in the cultural environment of students by paying attention to their reactions, their references, their tastes, their different viewpoints and their questions.

In short, the integration of culture in the classroom using meaningful cultural references is somewhat similar to building a network map whose primary ramifications are the emotional commitment of students, the development of their subject-specific competencies and the realization of cross-curricular learnings. ■

Photo: Marie Gravel

By Eve Krakow

New Instructional Materials "Focus" on Cross-Curricular Competencies in Elementary School

The series was developed in response to a mandate from the directors general of the English school boards. "What we did is 'focus' on one category of cross-curricular competencies in each model unit," explains Michel Lafontaine, Director of the Learning Materials Centre.

The *Focus* series consists of three binders, one for each cycle of elementary school. Each binder contains four model inquiry units, each highlighting either the intellectual, methodological, personal and social or communication-related competencies. The document also integrates the broad areas of learning and makes links to various subject areas per unit.

One of the unique aspects of the *Focus* series is its emphasis on differentiation. It offers tools, resources and strategies to help teachers differentiate teaching and learning in the classroom, whether this be through the learning content, process, products, contexts or evaluation. The series uses Howard Gardner's eight multiple intelligences as its entry point for differentiation.

"This is something that came out during our initial brainstorming," explains Lafontaine. "We decided that if we were creating teaching materials, we had to consider differentiation. It was suggested that one of the best ways to start would be to illustrate the multiple intelligences." To guide teachers in choosing activities for their students, the document indicates which kind of intelligence is drawn upon in each activity.

The learning activities were developed by a team of teachers, curriculum designers and education consultants. A two-month pilot period conducted in several schools last year served to gather feedback and make adjustments.

Designed to fit directly with the Québec Education Program, the *Focus* series aims to assist elementary teachers in their daily tasks and to show what a socioconstructivist approach could look like. In addition to the activities, close to 90 pages of tools are included in the binder, in the form of graphic organizers, observation sheets and evaluation tools. Most of the tools are open-ended and can be used in a wide variety of contexts.

The series is fresh off the press. *Focus III* (for Cycle Three) and *Focus II* (for Cycle Two) are now available, while *Focus I* (Cycle One) should be ready this month. A French version of the *Focus* series is also in the works: this version will include links to the French Second Language program.

An overview explaining how the series works and what's in the binders is available free of charge. The Centre also offers a free two-day "train the trainer" workshop to enable teachers or consultants to share the Focus materials with colleagues in their own school or school board.

To order or for more information, contact the Learning Materials Centre at (514) 685-6777 or visit their Website at <www.eerflmc.qc.ca>

The Learning Materials Centre was established by the English Educational Resources Foundation (EERF), a nonprofit initiative of the Directors General of the English School Boards of Québec, supported by the MEQ through the Canada-Québec Agreement for Minority Language Education and Second Language Instruction. Its mandate is to provide teaching and learning materials and resources to support English-language curriculum delivery. An agreement between the MEQ and the EERF signed in the summer of 2003 will ensure that the Learning Materials Center increases the scope of its involvement in providing such resources.

By Pascale Sauvé, based on a paper by the teachers of École Migwan in Pikogan (Translation)

ÉCOLE MIGWAN AND AMERINDIAN CULTURE

Under the measure to fund the introduction of a cultural dimension into schools, École Migwan, located in the Algonquin community of Pikogan, about three kilometres from Amos, put together a very special project to help promote Amerindian culture at school. The daylong activity was a chance for these elementary school students to return to their roots, as they journeyed to an ancestral site near Lake Obalski… in canoes.

Prepared in collaboration with AMIK Economic Development, which organizes canoe excursions on the Harricana River, the September activity focussed on the theme of canoeing and wilderness survival. Accompanied by resource people and guides, students took up paddles and canoed along the Harricana River for approximately 40 minutes to reach the celebrated historical site.

Once at their destination, the students began by learning how to build a temporary shelter and make a fire with a minimum of materials. Afterwards, the older children were shown how to prepare and cook bannock, while the younger ones observed each step of producing this traditional Native bread. Then, it was time for history: the students were told how the inhabitants of the site lived so long ago and the major events that took place there. The visit gave them a sense of their past, which helped strengthen their identity as the area's first inhabitants. Finally, the children were taken into the woods to learn how to get their bearings and receive some practical wilderness survival tips.

Back in the classroom, the students reviewed the activity by making drawings and writing down their impressions to reinforce what they had learned. In the end, the excursion was an opportunity to incorporate a number of disciplines like history, social sciences and the environment, as well as the themes of safety and prevention.

All participants really enjoyed this wonderful day in the great outdoors, which was both enriching and inspiring.

ON THE AGENDA

Basic School Regulation

Development of hypotheses and consultation
Winter 2004

Regulatory process **July to December 2004**
Adoption of the regulation **Winter 2005**
Entering into effect **July 2005**

Québec Education Program

Distribution of the QEP for Secondary Cycle One
Winter 2004

Development of the QEP for Secondary Cycle Two begins
Fall 2003

Project report on the evaluation of competencies in Elementary Cycle One

Choosing A Pet project report
Spring 2004

Field testing in pilot schools

Preliminary reports for the system as a whole
Fall 2004

English as a Second Language program for Elementary Cycle One

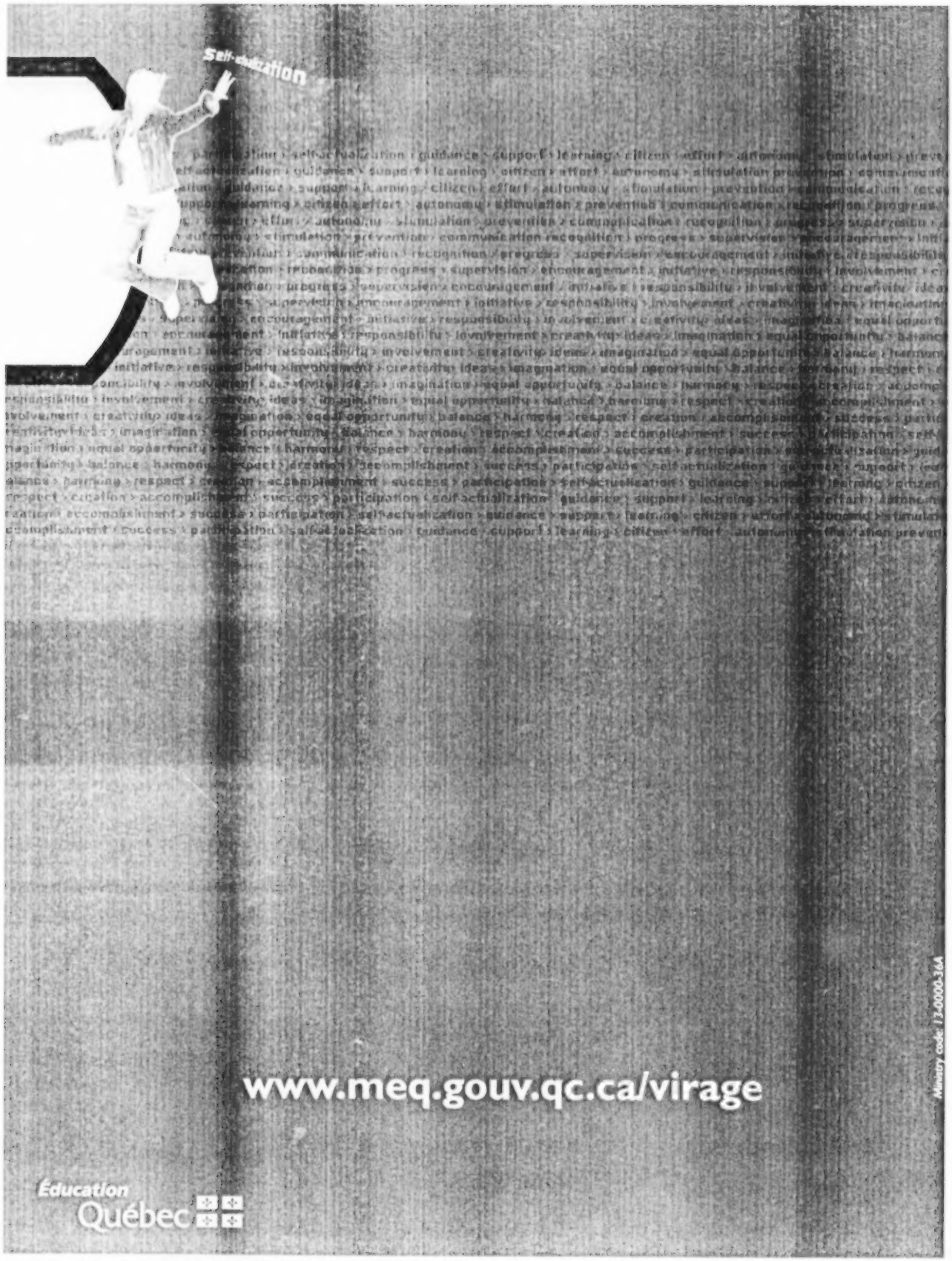
Field testing **September 2004**

New publications available on the MEQ Website: www.meq.gouv.qc.ca

Evaluation for Better Learning: Policy on the Evaluation of Learning **Fall 2003**

Students With Learning Difficulties: Reference Framework for Intervention **Fall 2003**

Sex Education in the Context of Education Reform
Fall 2003


Self-realization
www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/virage
Éducation
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